



## I Am Blessed To Pay It Forward

Mike Mote, IFB Solutions Manager of Accessibility and Workforce Development, was born blind; so was his brother. Both have a rare genetic condition impacting the nerves going from the brain to the eye.

Mike's parents pushed both brothers to be independent. Mike embraced that philosophy, graduating from Jacksonville State University with a degree in communications and earning a membership in the National Honor Society. After college, he worked in commercial radio for 15 years before joining IFB in 2012 as a quality analyst at a call center.

Promoted to assistive technology specialist in 2014, Mike became manager in 2017. He loves his job helping people who are blind embrace technology.

"I've always wanted to help people, especially with technology. When I see people who are blind succeed it's really satisfying and humbling. So many people have helped me. I'm glad I can pay it forward."

Some 70 percent of adult Americans who are blind are not employed. One of Mike's goals is to reduce that percentage.

"If we could even reduce that percentage by five percent that would be incredible. Our donors can help by graciously donating to IFB Solutions. IFB in return will invest in Braille



**When Mike is not helping others learn technology, he broadcasts football and basketball games in real time!**

displays, computers, other assistive technology, and job training so that people like me can have a successful career and break down barriers to the workforce."

When Mike is not helping IFB employees learn technology, he uses technology to share live sports coverage with listeners. He announces sports highlights in real-time, working with Learfield IMG College as a broadcaster for Southern Mississippi football and basketball. Last year, he worked for the Houston Cougars basketball team when they reached the NCAA Final Four!

Mike helps people who are blind

secure jobs through the Workforce Services division. Those employees work from home. The division partners with corporations such as Denny's restaurants to hire employees who are tech savvy. Mike works with corporate customers to make sure their systems are accessible, helping train employees and ensuring everyone is as efficient and productive as their peers. He also enjoys watching those employees move up.

"Technology has leveled the playing field. It's our responsibility to put people who are blind in positions to do their job well. They learn the technology first—that's the key to the castle. I want to see more assistive technology in the hands of those who can benefit so they can grow."



The IFB Solutions annual Asheville Golf Tournament is September 23 - 24.

LEARN MORE AT  
[ifbsolutions.org/asheville\\_golf](https://ifbsolutions.org/asheville_golf)

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## David Hampton, VP of Human Resources Fired Up to Help Employees Move Up at IFB



Over 50 percent of IFB’s workforce is blind. For many, it’s their first job and they are grateful to work, to contribute, and to reclaim their independence. And like all other employees, they want to advance, earn promotions, and earn raises. Those opportunities

are what excite me. Upward mobility is a vital part of IFB’s mission.

When I came here 11 years ago, I quickly realized it was a whole different world within HR. Once I saw what our folks do every day, it got me. The creativity here is wonderful. When someone has an idea to create a job or offer a service to benefit the blind community, we listen. And because we serve both people who are blind and sighted, we have to think outside the box.

Whether it is systems, technology or training, we continually strive for accessibility for employees with vision challenges. One critical key to upward mobility is technology; nearly everything is online these days. That’s why we offer assistive technology training courses. They help to build skills so people who are blind can use the tools they need to grow and develop. Accessible computers, smart phones or easy access to their pay and benefits information can be life changing.

One new upward mobility program that we are

tremendously excited about is our Business Essentials course provided through Guilford College. An endowment fund at the College established by John Googe, a longtime IFB advocate and board member, allows for our ongoing partnership. This introduction to a business curriculum is designed to help IFB employees better understand business principles. More than two dozen employees—both sighted and blind—have completed the program.

Opportunities for upward mobility begin with our recruitment and retention strategies. New employees get to come and try out a job. If it’s a good fit, we provide relocation assistance: help to find a place to live, connect them with schools for their children, help with rent, and help them get settled. Once at IFB, they can take advantage of our independent living training and have access to all our programs and support services.

I am so proud of my team that lives our Mission Possible core value every day. To us that means that people who are blind can accomplish anything people who are sighted can do. IFB Solutions sees it as our job to break down those barriers to opportunity and independence.

I’ll leave you with these thoughts. Is there a position at your company that could be converted to a position for someone who is blind? Are you interested in investing in the support of new or existing upward mobility programs? Perhaps you have an idea for a new way to help employees grow? Let us know.

## Why I Give: Volunteer of the Year, Charlie Pine



Donor. Influencer. Connector. Volunteer. Friend. These are but a few words that describe Charlie Pine, IFB’s agencywide Kathryn Garner Volunteer of the Year. More than a decade ago, Charlie joined the IFB Asheville Advisory Board. He brought his enthusiasm, connections, and gift of gab to the board.

“I’ve been on a lot of boards, but this is really personal to me,” said Charlie.

Charlie’s IFB journey expanded to include chairing the Asheville board and joining the organization’s overall Board of Directors. Along the way, he

*(continued on p.3)*



## Why I Give *(continued from p.2)*

played a major role in Asheville's capital campaign helping build our Community Low Vision Center, a spacious multi-purpose room, cafeteria and more.

Retiring as vice president and general manager after more than three decades at Belk, Charlie managed nine stores in the Asheville area. He reported to the Belk family directly, so he understands the dignity of a good job and family culture.

"IFB provides jobs for people who are blind, giving them a hand up and not a handout. Having a good job is much more than just a paycheck—it helps build self-esteem," he noted.

Charlie's volunteer efforts include bringing in many donors, Advisory Board members, and serving at various IFB employee functions.

"Helping by serving and donating lets me perpetuate what's here, allowing people who are blind to live like any other person. I also do it for the kids who are blind."

Per Charlie, the best way to start getting involved is to take a tour, attend a Sensitivity to Blindness training, visit the Community Low Vision Center or learn about our kids' programs.

"I believe that once you 'see' what's happening here, you will want to give your time, money or ideas. I am so happy to give back," he concluded.



IFB Solutions is the proud winner of the **2021 Better Business Bureau Torch Award for Ethics**. This prestigious award recognizes a business that believes in the high standards promoted by BBB and consistently acts on these standards in daily practices. Our People First Fund, which supported our 1,000 employees during the pandemic, was highlighted as one reason IFB earned this award. Thank you for supporting our mission.

## Additional IFB Award Winners



### OVERALL EMPLOYEE OF THE YEAR

**Diana Soto** works as a sewing machine operator and Spanish interpreter. During Covid, she helped with childcare at Tracy's Little Red School House so co-workers who are blind could work.



### IFB ASHEVILLE EMPLOYEE OF THE YEAR

**Jason Denton** jumps in to help wherever needed; he's worked in most of the departments and always shares his positive work ethic.



### IFB LITTLE ROCK EMPLOYEE OF THE YEAR

**Terrail Richardson** has experience in every department and is the first to welcome and help new employees who are blind adjust to the facility.



### CAREER ACHIEVER OF THE YEAR

**Joseph Rehmatullah** is an Assistive Technology Trainer in Asheville, teaching computer skills to his coworkers and children across N.C. and beyond.



### DELMER WALL OUTSTANDING SERVICE AWARD

**Shawn Sims**, who is sighted, supervises two departments, assists with safety protocols, and rallies the team to help employees in need.



### IFB COMMODORE FUNDERBURK VISIONARY AWARD

**Mark Doughton** is a dedicated board member who has solidified more than \$120,000 in donations over the years. His influence and heart for philanthropy has cleared a path to jobs for people who are blind.



### IFB PARTNER OF THE YEAR

**Milliken and Company** has partnered with IFB for more than a decade, sponsors the IFB golf tournament, shares business knowledge, and helps secure jobs for people who are blind.

# Upward Mobility: Proof That Your Support Changes Lives

## Shannon Satterfield, Workforce Services Manager

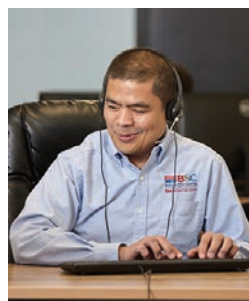
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*To me, the term “upward mobility” means “opportunity”. The opportunity to help change lives in the community of the blind and visually impaired. The chance to create employment for individuals who have struggled to find employment for years. Being visually impaired doesn’t define my ability to do the job. IFB Solutions invested in my upward mobility journey, and I am forever grateful.*

## Vic Llanes, Base Supply Centers Customer Support Specialist

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*IFB saw me for my skills, not my vision loss. When they opened the door to the workforce, I ran through it, worked hard, and it paid off.*

## Kim West, Director of First Impressions

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*Thirteen years ago, I started in manufacturing on a sewing machine at IFB Solutions in Asheville. After being promoted to Director of First Impressions, I get to see people who are blind go from hopeLESS to hopeFUL just by having a job at IFB. When other people have confidence in you, you have more confidence in yourself.*

## Ron Clements, Material Coordinator

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*I am proud to say I was one of the first persons with a visual impairment to be promoted to supervisor at IFB Solutions in Little Rock. Now I work in our shipping department. Thank you, IFB, for the job training that helped me move up in the company.*

## Faith Harding, 4PL Base Supply Center Programs Administrative Assistant

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*Starting as a sewing machine operator at IFB, I was determined to achieve more. I honed my technology and communication skills, engaged in various opportunities the company offered, and embraced gratitude. I’m fortunate to be an upward mobility program participant.*

## Margaret Ruffin, Paper Department Supervisor

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*The focus on upward mobility at IFB Solutions gives people who are blind an opportunity to achieve their dreams. Thanks to moving up from the machine operator role, I was able to live independently even after the loss of my sight. I want to encourage everyone to be the best they can.*